



Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Report

January 2019

Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report

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Non-technical summary

Methodology

The objective of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive is to “provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

The SEA Directive requires an environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes. The environmental assessment must include the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan.

An SEA need not be done in any more detail, or using any more resources, than is useful for its purpose.

Whilst it is best practice for SEA to be started as early as possible this SEA is being prepared due to unusual circumstances. Colchester Borough Council drafted an SEA screening opinion which concluded that the neighbourhood plan will not lead to likely significant effects and therefore a SEA is not required. However, owing to changes to the basic conditions an SEA is now required for the Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan. The advanced stage the neighbourhood plan had reached when it was established that an SEA is necessary has been the main difficulty in carrying out the assessment.

Background

The Vision for Eight Ash Green is that it should remain a small village located in a rural setting, mainly consisting of residential dwellings interspersed with open farmland but also containing some small business premises. Eight Ash Green should continue to enjoy wide open spaces within the village with uninterrupted views of the countryside. It should remain clearly separated from other nearby villages - it is not and should not become a suburb of either Stanway, Colchester or the proposed West Tey Garden Community/New Town.

The neighbourhood plan includes thirteen objectives and these are all compatible with the eight SEA objectives.

SEA objectives and baseline and context

The following is a list of relevant plans specific to Eight Ash Green:

Eight Ash Green Project Plan (2018)

Basic Conditions Statement (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Consultation Statement (2018)
 Regulation 14 Process – Consultation – Outcomes Document (2018)
 Evidence Base (2018)
 Village Settlement Boundary (2018)
 Site Selection Process (2018)
 Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies – Supporting Evidence (2018)
 Assessment of Sites put forward in Eight Ash Green (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan Health Check (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Questionnaire Results and Technical Report (2017)
 Housing Survey of Eight Ash Green (2015)
 Village Design Statement (2013)

The current socio economic profile of the village shows:-

- Some 1,730 people live locally made up of 1,070 working age adults (62%); 295 children under age 16 (17%); and 365 people over age 65 (21%) - 2011 census¹
- The majority who work are employed at locations outside the village. Agriculture is no longer a principal class of work. (responses to the 2017 questionnaire)²

There are four distinct areas of residential housing:-

- Spring Lane / Fordham Heath / Heathfields and Searle Way/The Walk and the Rise (medium density);
- Wood Lane and adjacent cul de sacs (low density);
- Fiddlers Folly/Porters Lane and Close (high density); &
- Seven Star Green (low density).

Assets within 5 kilometres include Colchester town with its multitude of shops and facilities; a good transport infrastructure with links via the A12 and the main London to Norwich rail line at Colchester and local rail services at Marks Tey station; the Stanway shopping and leisure facilities; three GP surgeries including a health centre; and good secondary and further education establishments.

There is a sense of spaciousness and calm to be found in the village. The Heath, open fields, network of footpaths, hedgerows, trees and woods, the biodiversity, play and sports facilities, and clean fresh air all contribute to an environment conducive towards a healthy, vibrant community across the whole age range from children, young families to senior citizens.

The green infrastructure also contributes to and helps sustain an abundance of wildlife utilising the numerous green corridors that includes a myriad of birds (sparrows,

¹ (2011) *Office for National Statistics Census*

² (2017) *Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire*

blackbirds, jays, pigeons, robins, pheasants, owls to name but a few) but also “land based” animals such as squirrels, deer, foxes, badgers for example as well as aquatic wildlife in the ponds located across the village such as ducks, moorhens, dragonflies, the Essex Skipper butterfly, Foesel’s Bush cricket and the Meadow grasshopper.

Identifying environmental problems is an opportunity to identify areas that the plan should address. The key issues for the neighbourhood plan were identified from extensive meetings with villagers, businesses, landowners and the Parish Council, the responses to the 2017 questionnaire and local knowledge and include:-

- Retaining the rural character of the village by protecting the environment – landscape/open spaces, thus helping to support nature conservation;
- Ensuring there is no coalescence with Stanway and/or Colchester or the proposed West Tey Garden Community/New Town i.e. the prevention of urban sprawl and urbanisation of the village; and
- Providing high quality housing with good design and layout on a site chosen by the villagers.

The SEA Framework is set out in the table below.

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
1. To provide high quality housing that reflects the existing, distinct open character area of the village and meets the appropriate needs of the community both now and in the future	Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the existing and growing population?	The number of net additional dwellings	Material assets Climatic factors
	Will it provide more affordable homes?	Affordable housing completions	
	Will it deliver a range of housing types?	Percentage of residential completions that are two or three bedroom properties	

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
2. To support and where appropriate, expand the local businesses to boost the local economy and employment	Will it improve the delivery of a range of employment opportunities to support the growing population?	Amount of floorspace developed for employment, sqm	Material assets Population Cultural heritage
3. To protect the existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways in the village	Will it reduce the need to travel?	% of new residential development within 30 minutes of public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major retail centre	Population Climatic factors Air Human health
	Will the levels of sustainable travel increase?	Percentage of journeys to work by walking and cycling and percentage of journeys to work by public transport	
4. To protect and where possible, enhance green/open spaces and biodiversity in the whole of the village (including hedgerows, trees and woods)	Will existing open spaces be protected & new open spaces be created?	Contributions received towards open space	Population Human health Biodiversity Flora Fauna
	Will it protect and improve biodiversity?	Area of land offset for biodiversity	

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
5. To provide, support, maintain and where appropriate, introduce a range of amenities in the village	Will it retain and enhance community facilities?	Contributions received towards community facilities	Population Human health
6. To protect the ancient heritage of our village	Will it protect and enhance the heritage and cultural assets?	Number of listed buildings demolished Number of locally listed buildings demolished Number of Buildings at Risk	Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage
7. To encourage and support the effective and efficient use of the Earth's natural resources and promote energy efficiency in Eight Ash Green	Will it promote energy efficiency and support the delivery of renewable energy schemes?	Renewable Energy Installed by Type	Climatic factors Air
8. To take steps to prevent flooding in the village	Will it reduce the risk of flooding?	Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality Number of SUDS schemes approved by ECC	Climatic factors Water Soil Biodiversity Flora Fauna
	Will it deliver effective SUDS and improve drainage?		

Strategic Alternatives

The alternative housing sites were appraised and compared to the preferred allocation.

Plan policies

The policies in the neighbourhood plan will ensure that housing will be delivered. This will include a mix of housing types, including affordable housing, to meet the evidenced needs of the village. Sustainable transport linkages will likely be delivered at the same time as the housing, which may benefit existing residents by creating a safe footway to the school and two new bus stops. A landscaping scheme will be required which will mitigate any potential impact on residential amenity, the setting of the adjacent listed building and landscape character. There is potential for a negative impact on biodiversity as the site the criteria apply to is adjacent to a local wildlife site. New residents may use this adjacent land for recreation, including daily dog walking, which can lead to trampling. There will be a positive impact on taking steps to prevent flooding through the requirement of a scheme demonstrating that appropriate surface water drainage is provided within the site and requirements for sustainable urban drainage systems. There will be a positive impact on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources through a requirement for appropriate wiring to be installed to enable charging for electric vehicles and the potential for the installation of sustainable battery pods that stores energy from renewable sources. The plan will protect landscape, open spaces and the character of the village by preventing coalescence with Stanway and Colchester. The plan will permanently protect existing open spaces, hedgerows, trees, woodland and biodiversity throughout the plan period. Green infrastructure is required, which will result in positive effects on sustainable travel, biodiversity and surface water flooding. The plan will have a positive impact on heritage assets by requiring listed buildings or historic assets to be maintained or where possible enhanced. The plan will result in positive effects on the local economy and employment by supporting the expansion of local businesses.

Implementation

Once made, neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan. The Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan for Colchester.

Methodology

Approach adopted in the SEA

The objective of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive is to “provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

The SEA Directive requires an environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes. The environmental assessment must include the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan.

An SEA need not be done in any more detail, or using any more resources, than is useful for its purpose. The SEA Directive requires consideration of the significant environmental effects of the plan and of reasonable alternatives that take into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan. Article 5 of the Directive lists factors to be considered in deciding what information to include in the environmental report:

- Information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment;
- The contents and level of detail of the plan;
- The objectives and geographical scope of the plan;
- The stage reached in the decision making process; and
- The extent to which it would be more appropriate to assess certain matters elsewhere in the decision making process.

Whilst it is best practice for SEA to be started as early as possible this SEA is being prepared due to unusual circumstances. Colchester Borough Council drafted an SEA screening opinion which concluded that the neighbourhood plan will not lead to likely significant effects and therefore a SEA is not required.

However, changes to the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, which came into force on 28 December 2018 make it clear that neighbourhood plans can have an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive and meet the basic condition of no likely significant effects on Habitat sites.

Towards the latter stages of the neighbourhood plan development the draft Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) was circulated to Officers. Whilst this is still currently in draft form, the Essex Coast RAMS sets out Zones

of Influence (Zol), which have been agreed by Natural England. Residential development falling within the Zol is likely to significantly affect Habitat sites through increased recreational disturbance. The whole of Colchester Borough is within the Zol, which means that all residential development in Colchester Borough is likely to significantly affect Habitats sites through increased recreational disturbance. The neighbourhood plan therefore needs to consider appropriate avoidance/ mitigation measures. Until recently this could be done through a screening opinion. However, a recent decision from the European Court of Justice (People Over Wind and Sweetman) requires avoidance and mitigation measures to be considered in an appropriate assessment rather than a screening opinion.

The implications of this are that an appropriate assessment is required for the neighbourhood plan, even though the effects are in-combination and relatively minor when considering that the neighbourhood plan allocates land for 150 dwellings and Eight Ash Green is not adjacent to a Habitats site.

The SEA Directive states that SEA is mandatory if an appropriate assessment is required.

Who was consulted and when

When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report the authorities with environmental responsibility must be consulted. These authorities, or consultation bodies, are Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.

These consultation bodies were consulted on the scoping report for a 5 week period.

Historic England commented on the scope of the SEA. Their response is set out below:

We are pleased to note that the history, and historic environment are included in the supporting text of the Scoping Report, and that the parish's designated heritage assets are considered as part of the baseline information.

We would suggest that more information on the non-designated below ground archaeology in the parish could be included if considered appropriate. This can either be obtained from the Colchester Historic Environment Record, or via the Heritage Gateway <<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>>.

For further information, we would refer you to the guidance in Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment, which can be found here: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>>. This advice sets out the historic environment factors which need to be considered during the Strategic

Environmental Assessment or Sustainability Appraisal process, and our recommendations for information you may need to include.

Difficulties encountered in compiling information or carrying out the assessment

The advanced stage the neighbourhood plan had reached when it was established that an SEA is necessary has been the main difficulty in carrying out the assessment.

The neighbourhood plan evidence base has been used to carry out the assessment and whilst the neighbourhood plan is at an advanced stage, having been submitted to Colchester Borough Council, it has been approached with an open mind.

Regard has been had to Article 5 of the Directive, which lists the following factors to be considered in deciding what information to include in the environmental report:

- Information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment;
- The contents and level of detail of the plan;
- The objectives and geographical scope of the plan;
- The stage reached in the decision making process; and
- The extent to which it would be more appropriate to assess certain matters elsewhere in the decision making process.

Background

Purpose of the SEA

The purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive is to “provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.

Objectives of the plan

The Vision for Eight Ash Green is that it should remain a small village located in a rural setting, mainly consisting of residential dwellings interspersed with open farmland but also containing some small business premises. Eight Ash Green should continue to enjoy wide open spaces within the village with uninterrupted views of the countryside. It should remain clearly separated from other nearby villages - it is not and should not become a suburb of either Stanway, Colchester or the proposed West Tey Garden Community/New Town.

The Objectives are set out in the box below.

SEA objectives and baseline and context

Links to other international, national, regional and local plans and programmes, and relevant environmental objectives including how these have been taken into account

A plan may be influenced in various ways by other plans or environmental objectives. It is important to understand the content and objectives of other plans.

The following is a list of plans and programmes which were identified, reviewed and considered as part of the emerging Local Plan Section 2 Sustainability Appraisal. Whilst they may not all be directly relevant to the neighbourhood plan this comprehensive list highlights the wide range of plans and programmes which may influence the neighbourhood plan. As expected for a neighbourhood plan, the locally specific plans have been extensively reviewed and have influenced this neighbourhood plan.

International

Review of the European Sustainable Development Strategy (2009)
 European Community Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (2012)
 Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice (2003)

National

Adapting to Climate Change: Ensuring Progress in Key Sectors (2013)
 National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
 National Planning Practice Guide (2014)
 DECC National Energy Policy Statement EN1 (2011)
 DCLG: An Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning (2012)
 JNCC/Defra UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (2012)
 Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services (2011)
 Mainstreaming Sustainable Development (2011)
 National policy for travellers (2012)
 PPS 5 Historic Environment Guide (2010)
 Flood and Water Management Act (2009)
 Safeguarding our soils (2009)
 Community Infrastructure Levy Guidance (April 2013)
 UK Marine Policy Statement, HM Government (2011)
 Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (2011)

The Rights of Way Circular 1/09, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, October 2009
 Encouraging Sustainable Travel, Highways Agency
 A12/ A120 Route based strategy, Highways Agency (2013)
 East of England Route Strategy Evidence Report, Highways Agency (2014)

Regional

Haven Gateway: Programme of Development: A Framework for Growth, 2008 -2017 (2007)
 Haven Gateway: Integrated Development Plan (2008)
 South East LEP Investment and Funding (March/April 2014)
 Anglian Water Business Plan (2015-2020) (2012)
 Draft Water Resource Management Plan (2014 – 2039) (2014)
 Anglian River Basement Management Plan (2009 and draft 2015)
 Catchment Abstraction Management Plan
 Haven Gateway Water Cycle Study: Stage 1 Report (2008)
 Atkins A120 Wider Economic Impacts Study (2008)
 The draft Anglian River Basin Flood Risk Management Plan (2015)
 The Combined Essex Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) (2013)
 The Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan (2014)

County

Commissioning School Places in Essex 2014/19 (2015)
 ECC developer contributions document (2010)
 Education contributions guideline supplement
 ECC Corporate Plan 2013 – 2017
 Vision for Essex 2013 – 2017: Where innovation brings prosperity (2013)
 Corporate Outcomes Framework 2014 - 2018 Essex County Council (2014)
 Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (2017)
 Essex Minerals Local Plan (2014)
 Colchester draft Surface Water Management Plan (2014)
 Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (2011)
 Essex Transport Strategy: the Local Transport Plan for Essex (2011)
 Highway Authority's Development Management Policies (2011)
 Economic Growth Strategy (2012)
 Integrated County Strategy (2010)
 Essex Wildlife Trust's Living Landscapes
 Combined Essex Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (2013)
 Essex Design Guide (2005)

North Essex Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009)
 Essex and South Suffolk Shoreline Management Plan (second phase) (2011)
 Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010 – 2015
 Essex Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Essex County Council
 Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex 2007 – 2032 (2008)
 Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, Essex County Council (2013)
 Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2014)

Local

Colchester Borough Publication Draft Local Plan (2017)
 Colchester Borough Core Strategy (2014)
 Colchester Borough Development Policies (2014)
 Colchester Borough Site Allocations (2010)
 Colchester Borough Local Plan Section 1 Sustainability Appraisal report (2017)
 Colchester Borough Local Plan Section 2 Sustainability Appraisal report (2017)
 Colchester Borough Local Plan Section 1 Appropriate assessment report (2017)
 (2017)
 Colchester Borough Local Plan Section 2 Appropriate assessment report (2017)
 Creative Colchester Strategy & Action Plan (2012)
 Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan 2012-2015 (2012)
 PPG17 Open Space , Sport & Recreation (2008)
 Safer Colchester Partnership: Strategic Assessment of Crime and Annual Partnership Plan 2012-2013 (2012)
 Townscape Character Assessment (2006)
 Landscape Character Assessment (2006)
 Scott Wilson Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)
 Affordable Housing SPD (2011)
 Communities Facilities SPD (updated 2012)
 Better Town Centre SPD (2012)
 Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)
 Colchester Borough Council Housing Strategy (2012)
 Local Air Quality Management Progress Report (2013)
 Colchester Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2014-2019 draft (2014)
 Colchester Borough Council's Comprehensive Climate Risk Assessment (2010)
 Colchester Borough Council Landscape Strategy (2013)

Water Cycle Study (2008)
 Colchester Cycling Strategy SPD (2012)
 Core Strategy (2008)
 Development Policies DPD (2010)
 Site Allocations Policies DPD (2010)
 Habitat Regulations Assessment Survey and Monitoring Programme, Final Report, Colchester Borough Council (December 2013)
 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2014)
 Retail and Town Centre Uses Study Colchester Borough Council: Retail Update 2013 (2013)
 Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)
 Colchester Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project, Essex County Council, 2009

Neighbouring authorities

Tendring economic development strategy (2013)
 Tendring's SHMA (2013)
 Braintree's Adopted Core Strategy (2011)
 Babergh Adopted Core Strategy and Adopted Policies (2011 – 2031) Local Plan Document (2014)
 Braintree District Council Local Plan Issues and Options and Sustainability Appraisal (2015)
 Braintree's SHMA (2014)
 Maldon's SHMA (2014)
 Braintree District Economic Development Prospectus 2013/2026 (2013)

Eight Ash Green

Eight Ash Green Project Plan (2018)
 Basic Conditions Statement (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Consultation Statement (2018)
 Regulation 14 Process – Consultation – Outcomes Document (2018)
 Evidence Base (2018)
 Village Settlement Boundary (2018)
 Site Selection Process (2018)
 Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies – Supporting Evidence (2018)
 Assessment of Sites put forward in Eight Ash Green (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan Health Check (2018)
 Eight Ash Green Questionnaire Results and Technical Report (2017)
 Housing Survey of Eight Ash Green (2015)
 Village Design Statement (2013)

Description of baseline characteristics and predicted future baseline

Baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring environmental effects and helps to identify problems and ways to deal with them. The Environmental Report can focus on issues where significant effects are likely, it does not have to focus on every issue. A practical approach is needed as the collection and updating of baseline data could go on indefinitely.

This baseline data section is taken from the neighbourhood plan and includes a detailed description of Eight Ash Green and the environmental issues it faces.

The Parish of Eight Ash Green came into existence in 1947, at the time, the population was approximately some 600 and the villagers were mainly involved in agriculture and local trades. There were scattered farms and cottages with two main dwelling areas around Fordham Heath as well as the crossroads by what was the Brick and Tile Public House. The Commons at Seven Star Green and Daisy Green were given to our Parish Council in 1973 by deed of gift by the Lord of the Manor of Copford.

Within the village is an ancient 36 acre Heath which is both a registered green and has common land status; an open, green landscape both internal and external to the village with several conservation areas; thirteen Grade 2 listed buildings; a public house; a village hall; a church; allotments; a hotel and leisure club; two dental surgeries; a play area for children on the Heath; eight ponds that support a myriad of wildlife; an Ofsted rated good primary school; and recreation facilities by way of both a cricket and football pitch, and a National Cycle Route No 13 which runs from NW to SE across the Parish.

The current socio economic profile of the village shows:-

- Some 1,730 people live locally made up of 1,070 working age adults (62%); 295 children under age 16 (17%); and 365 people over age 65 (21%) - 2011 census³
- The majority who work are employed at locations outside the village. Agriculture is no longer a principal class of work. (responses to the 2017 questionnaire)⁴

There are four distinct areas of residential housing:-

- Spring Lane / Fordham Heath / Heathfields and Searle Way/The Walk and the Rise (medium density);
- Wood Lane and adjacent cul de sacs (low density);
- Fiddlers Folly/Porters Lane and Close (high density); &
- Seven Star Green (low density).

Assets within 5 kilometres include Colchester town with its multitude of shops and facilities; a good transport infrastructure with links via the A12 and the main London to

³ (2011) Office for National Statistics Census

⁴ (2017) Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire

Norwich rail line at Colchester and local rail services at Marks Tey station; the Stanway shopping and leisure facilities; three GP surgeries including a health centre; and good secondary and further education establishments.

Regionally, Eight Ash Green is categorised as being in the North Thames Regional Character Area. In terms of the Essex County Character Areas, it is categorised as being in the E2 South Colchester Farmlands Area, nestled right up against the C7 Colne Valley Character Area to the north. It is described as being a “small linear village settlement” with its “setting providing visual and physical separation from Colchester”.

The village is based on sediments of sand and gravel as well as clay deposits and comprises a gently undulating broad plateau predominantly used for arable or improved pasture. It interspersed with woodland and natural habitats in an open environment that provides wildlife corridors, combined with an ancient 36 acre heath.

There is a sense of spaciousness and calm to be found in the village. The Heath, open fields, network of footpaths, hedgerows, trees and woods, the biodiversity, play and sports facilities, and clean fresh air all contribute to an environment conducive towards a healthy, vibrant community across the whole age range from children, young families to senior citizens.

The green infrastructure also contributes to and helps sustain an abundance of wildlife utilising the numerous green corridors that includes a myriad of birds (sparrows, blackbirds, jays, pigeons, robins, pheasants, owls to name but a few) but also “land based” animals such as squirrels, deer, foxes, badgers for example as well as aquatic wildlife in the ponds located across the village such as ducks, moorhens, dragonflies, the Essex Skipper butterfly, Foesel’s Bush cricket and the Meadow grasshopper.

Seven Star Green, which is a registered Village Green of medieval legacy, contains some 125 species of wildflower grasses that have been uncultivated for hundreds of years with plants such as the Meadow Foxtail and Soft Rush to be found there.

Environmental issues and problems

Identifying environmental problems is an opportunity to identify areas that the plan should address. The key issues for the neighbourhood plan were identified from extensive meetings with villagers, businesses, landowners and the Parish Council, the responses to the 2017 questionnaire and local knowledge and include:-

- Retaining the rural character of the village by protecting the environment – landscape/open spaces, thus helping to support nature conservation;

- Ensuring there is no coalescence with Stanway and/or Colchester or the proposed West Tey Garden Community/New Town i.e. the prevention of urban sprawl and urbanisation of the village; and
- Providing high quality housing with good design and layout on a site chosen by the villagers.

SEA objectives, targets and indicators

Whilst not specifically required by the SEA Directive, SEA objectives are a recognised way of considering the environmental effects of the plan and comparing the effects of reasonable alternatives.

They serve a different purpose to the plan objectives, although there may be some overlapping of objectives.

The SEA objectives for the neighbourhood plan are derived from the review of plans and programmes and sustainability objectives, baseline data, environmental problems, neighbourhood plan objectives and the emerging Local Plan Section 2 sustainability appraisal objectives.

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
1. To provide high quality housing that reflects the existing, distinct open character area of the village and meets the appropriate needs of the community both now and in the future	Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the existing and growing population?	The number of net additional dwellings	Material assets Climatic factors
	Will it provide more affordable homes?	Affordable housing completions	
	Will it deliver a range of housing types?	Percentage of residential completions that are two or three bedroom properties	
			Material assets

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
2. To support and where appropriate, expand the local businesses to boost the local economy and employment	Will it improve the delivery of a range of employment opportunities to support the growing population?	Amount of floorspace developed for employment, sqm	Population Cultural heritage
3. To protect the existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways in the village	Will it reduce the need to travel?	% of new residential development within 30 minutes of public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major retail centre	Population Climatic factors Air Human health
	Will the levels of sustainable travel increase?	Percentage of journeys to work by walking and cycling and percentage of journeys to work by public transport	
4. To protect and where possible, enhance green/open spaces and biodiversity in the whole of the village (including hedgerows, trees and woods)	Will existing open spaces be protected & new open spaces be created?	Contributions received towards open space	Population Human health Biodiversity Flora Fauna
	Will it protect and improve biodiversity?	Area of land offset for biodiversity	
5. To provide, support, maintain and where appropriate, introduce a range of amenities in the village	Will it retain and enhance community facilities?	Contributions received towards community facilities	Population Human health

Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators	SEA Themes
6. To protect the ancient heritage of our village	Will it protect and enhance the heritage and cultural assets?	Number of listed buildings demolished Number of locally listed buildings demolished Number of Buildings at Risk	Cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage
7. To encourage and support the effective and efficient use of the Earth's natural resources and promote energy efficiency in Eight Ash Green	Will it promote energy efficiency and support the delivery of renewable energy schemes?	Renewable Energy Installed by Type	Climatic factors Air
8. To take steps to prevent flooding in the village	Will it reduce the risk of flooding?	Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality Number of SUDS schemes approved by ECC	Climatic factors Water Soil Biodiversity Flora Fauna
	Will it deliver effective SUDS and improve drainage?		

Strategic Alternatives

This chapter sets out the main strategic alternatives considered and how they were identified. An explanation is given where there are no reasonable alternatives. It compares the significant environmental effects of the alternatives and includes justification for why alternatives were rejected.

VSB 1: To extend the current Village Settlement Boundary to include the area of Fiddlers Field (formerly known as Site 226)

Alternatives: reasonable alternatives would be to extend the village settlement boundary to include alternative sites. Alternative sites are appraised as part of the appraisal of policy FF1 and the findings of these appraisals are also relevant to this policy.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alt.	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Reason for selecting preferred policy and rejecting alternatives: The preferred policy and the alternative of not including a policy would both result in the delivery of housing to meet the objectively assessed housing need (OAN). It is possible that more housing would be delivered in the absence of a policy limiting the extension of the settlement boundary. However, the preferred policy can meet the OAN. The preferred policy has been selected as it will meet the needs of the village. The alternative has been rejected as it could lead to development of a scale that is not proportionate to the size of Eight Ash Green.

FF 1 – To designate Fiddlers Field as a single Strategic Site for the development 150 dwellings

Alternatives: to designate alternative sites for the development of 150 dwellings. The following sites were considered as part of the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and have been appraised as part of the SEA:

1. Site 035 - Milestone Farm
2. Site 039 - Halstead Road
3. Site 063 - Seven Star Green
4. Site 124 - Land Fronting Halsted Road
5. Site 149 - Brickfields, Land to North of Halstead Road
6. Site 150 - Land to South of Halstead Road
7. Site 155 - Land to South of Halstead Road
8. Site 208 - Land Adjacent to Brickstables Barn
9. Site HF - Heathfields

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy	++	0	0/+	+/-	0	-	+	+
Site 035	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+
Site 039	+	0	0	+/-	+	0	+	+
Site 063	+	0	0	0/-	+	-	+	+
Site 124	+	0	0/+	--	0	0	+	+
Site 149	+	0	-	-	+	0	+	+
Site 150	+	0	0	--	0	-	+	+
Site 155	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	+
Site 208	+	0	0	--	0	0	+	+
Site HF	+	0	0	-	0	0	+	+

Reason for selecting preferred site and rejecting alternatives: the allocated site will deliver the OAN in the plan period and is likely to deliver a wide mix of housing including affordable housing. The site is in close proximity to the school and includes the provision of two additional bus stops. Due to the rural nature of the village, all proposals are likely to result in a neutral impact to reducing the need to travel. The allocated site will include a play area and a sustainable urban drainage scheme which could include additional open space. The allocated site is adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site and could result in an increase in activity such as dog walking, therefore mitigation will be required. A negative impact score has been given to those sites that are located adjacent to a Local Wildlife Site or Local Nature Reserve. Where proposals have included a play area or football pitches, a positive impact has been awarded. Where sites have indicated a community facility could be provided, a positive impact has been given. There are 13 listed buildings within the Eight Ash Green parish. Policy HE1 include the requirement to preserve the setting of listed buildings, the severity of any impact would depend on the layout of the development. Where a site is located adjacent to or in close proximity to a listed building this has resulted in a negative impact. Policy RE1 supports residential developments including renewable sources of energy, therefore all sites have been given a positive impact. Similarly, there is a policy requirement (EP5) to include a sustainable urban drainage scheme, as all of the proposed sites will be required to include this, a positive impact has been given. Where a site does not have direct access to the road network and would rely upon other alternative sites being developed, this has resulted in a negative impact. Site 124 has been promoted as a care home through the plan process, however this has been assessed as a residential proposal. Although all the alternative sites could deliver housing, they would be unable to deliver the total OAN in isolation, as a result all alternatives have been given a positive score for delivering housing. All of the sites assessed are residential proposals, and a neutral scoring for impact to local businesses, economy and employment has been given. Development of Greenfield sites located to

the edge of settlement boundaries is likely to affect the landscape character through the increase of an urban environment. Where sites have the potential to lead to settlement coalescence with Stanway, Colchester a double negative score has been given. The preferred site has been selected as this site is able to accommodate the total OAN, is in close proximity to local amenities including the school, has direct access to the main road through the village and will not lead to coalescence with Stanway, Colchester.

FF 2 – Up to 150 residential dwellings on Fiddlers Field with a layout of medium density and design to be compatible with the character and context of the village

FF 3 – A mix of residential dwellings comprising houses, bungalows and flats of no more than two storeys high which meet the evidenced housing needs of the village offering homes for first time buyers, downsizers, families and executives

FF 4 - A new direct access road built to a standard which can accommodate HGV traffic and to the satisfaction of the local Highways Authority, will be provided directly linking Fiddlers Hill to the A1124 with access to the said road being provided by way of priority junctions

FF 5 – A specific speed limit and other speed limiting measures that are appropriate to the residential roads within Fiddlers Field site

FF 6 – A new pavement built to standards outlined within Highways England Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 7 Pavements Design and Maintenance, will be provided along the northern edge of the A1124 to connect the site to the village facilities

FF 7 – A pedestrian through route linking to the Holy Trinity School and the Fiddlers Folly development

FF 8 – Two new bus stops, including lay-by, raised kerb and shelter located on the A1124 within 50 metres of the site entrance

FF 9 – A suitable landscaping plan which provides screening to the existing businesses on Fiddlers Farm and adjacent houses, to include the Grade 2 listed Fiddlers Farmhouse, all of which border and limit any expansion of the site, to ensure that ambient noise and amenity currently enjoyed at these properties is maintained

FF 10 – A scheme demonstrating that appropriate surface water drainage is provided within the site

FF 11 – Appropriate wiring to be installed within each property to provide for charging for electric cars/vehicles

FF 12 - Ducting to be installed to every new house on the site for the provision of either copper or fibre superfast broadband

FF 13 - All the new dwellings on the site should have the potential for the installation of sustainable battery pods that stores energy from renewable sources

FF 14 – A Section 106 agreement in respect of a recreational play area on the site, a contribution towards the delivery of a new community centre/hub, a contribution towards the expansion of the local primary school and should it be found necessary, a contribution towards the expansion of capacity of Junction 26 of the A12

Whilst these are 13 separate policies they all relate to requirements for the allocated site. Therefore they will be appraised together.

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy looks at the principles of promoting sustainable development and meeting the needs of the parish within the plan period.

Domestic Housing Policy (DH1): Future development within Eight Ash Green should be able to clearly demonstrate by way of relevant plans and supporting documents that it should:

- ***Be of a density, design, height and layout that respects and responds to the local character of the village and the location/site's context***
- ***Provide a mix of dwelling size, type and tenure that reflects the housing needs of the Parish***
- ***Provide electric charging points and sustainable battery pods wherever possible and appropriate to do so***
- ***Provide suitable connections for the installation of high quality telecommunications infrastructure***

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy looks at the principles of promoting sustainable development and meeting the needs of the parish within the plan period.

Environment Policy 1 (EP1): No development is to be permitted that will and/or could result in, or provide the possibility of future coalescence of Eight Ash Green with Stanway/Colchester and/or the proposed West Tey Garden community/New Town

Alternatives: An alternative approach would be not to include a settlement coalescence policy.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Alt.	+	0	0	-	0	0	0	0

Reason for selecting preferred policy and rejecting alternatives: The alternative could lead to the delivery of higher numbers of housing, without a coalescence policy restricting development. However, the policy and plan can deliver the OAN and so no further housing is needed to meet the needs of Eight Ash Green within the plan period. The preferred policy has been selected as it meets the OAN and protects landscape, open spaces and the character of the village. The alternative has been rejected as there is a risk that in the absence of a policy restricting development that would lead to coalescence Eight Ash Green will merge into Stanway and Colchester.

Environment Policy 2 (EP 2): The areas of green space in the village are to be protected from development, including change of use, unless it can be demonstrated that:-

- the chosen site represents the only available location for the given development proposal;***
- the proposal would not result in the loss of an area important for its amenity including its contribution to biodiversity, recreation and landscape character with Eight Ash Green; and***
- Alternative and improved provision is provided in a location well related to the functional requirements of the relocated use and its existing and future users***

Alternative: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy protects areas of green space in the village. An option not to protect areas of green space in the village would not be sustainable and would be contrary to Colchester's Local Plan.

Environment Policy 3 (EP 3): Any developments in the village that may result in the destruction and/or removal of existing hedgerows, trees or woods, will only be permitted if these elements are replaced with similar features that are in good condition, on the same site or plot

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy protects hedgerows, trees and woodland. An option not to protect hedgerows, trees and woodland would not be sustainable and would be contrary to Colchester's Local Plan.

Environment Policy 4 (EP 4): Existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways provide a high level of amenity value and will be protected. New developments should integrate with the current green infrastructure network, seeking to improve the connectivity between wildlife area and green spaces through measures such as improving and extending the existing footpath and cycle path network, allowing greater access to housing and retail facilities, green spaces, public open spaces and the countryside

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy looks at the principles of promoting sustainable development within the plan period.

Environment Policy 5 (EP 5): Development will be supported where it can be shown that it will not negatively impact upon the existing network of drainage ditches within the village. The protection, extension and enhancement of these facilities is encouraged. Where it is necessary to enable development, the stopping up or diverting of drainage ditches will be supported if it can be demonstrated that no additional flood risk will be created

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy looks at the principles of promoting sustainable development within the plan period.

Heritage Policy 1 (Her 1): Any Listed Building or Historic Asset and their setting within the Neighbourhood Plan Area should be maintained or where possible enhanced to protect from any future development.

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy seeks to maintain or where possible enhance heritage assets. An option not to maintain or where possible enhance heritage assets would not be sustainable and would be contrary to the NPPF and Colchester's Local Plan.

Renewable Energy 1 - (Homes) (RE 1): Proposals for small-scale renewable energy generation associated within single residential properties will be supported provided it can be shown that they are located and designed in such a manner so as to minimise any increase in ambient noise levels and avoid any unacceptable impacts upon visual amenity

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy supports micro-generation provided it does not have adverse impacts. An option not to support micro-

generation would not be sustainable and would be contrary to the NPPF and Colchester's Local Plan.

Renewable Energy 2 - (Solar Farms) (RE 2): Proposals for commercial solar farms will be supported where they are directed towards low grade agricultural land or brownfield sites and are designed in such a way so as to minimise increases in ambient noise levels and deliver adequate natural screening to avoid impacts upon visual amenity

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy supports commercial solar farms provided it does not have adverse impacts. An option not to support solar farms would not be sustainable and would be contrary to the NPPF and Colchester's Local Plan.

Businesses Policy 1 (BP 1): Moat Farm (shown above) is designated as a business area. Proposals for the enhancement of existing facilities or for new business premises on the site will be supported provided they are of suitable design, provide satisfactory car parking for staff and visitors and have implemented a strategy for the containment and subsequent disposal of waste

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy looks at the principles of promoting sustainable development within the plan period. The policy supports the enhancement of existing facilities or new business premises on the site, not the expansion of the site.

Businesses Policy 2 (BP 2): Support will be given towards the retention of existing businesses within the Fiddlers Farm business area (shown above) to include the provision of satisfactory car parking for staff and visitors as well as for the provision of a strategy to secure the containment and subsequent disposal of waste

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy supports the retention of existing businesses. An option not to support the retention of existing businesses would not be sustainable and would be contrary to Colchester's Local Plan.

Community Amenities (CA 1): To protect the allotments site (as shown below) from any future potential development

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy protects the existing allotments site. An option not to protect the existing allotments site would not be sustainable and would be contrary to Colchester's Local Plan.

Community Site (CS 1): Land on the site of the Church of England Church (as shown below) is designated as the site for a new Community Hub/Hall and shall be safeguarded for that purpose. Development proposals which promote alternative uses on the site will not be supported

Alternatives: The alternative is not to designate the site for a new community hall.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy	O	O	O	O	+	O	O	O
Alt.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Reason for selecting preferred policy and rejecting alternatives: The preferred policy is likely to have a more positive impact than the alternative on the objective to provide, support, maintain and where appropriate, introduce a range of amenities in the village. Whilst it is not certain that a new community facility will be provided, it is more likely where there is a policy supporting a new community hall. The preferred policy has been selected for this reason. The alternative has been rejected as there is a lesser chance of the delivery of a new community building without a policy in the neighbourhood plan.

RAMS 1 - All residential development within the zones of influence of European Sites will be required to make a financial contribution towards mitigation measures, as detailed in the Essex coast RAMS, to avoid adverse in-combination recreational disturbance effects on European Sites.

In the interim period, before the Essex Coast RAMS is completed, all residential development within the zones of influence will need to deliver all measures identified (including strategic measures) through project level HRAs, or otherwise, to mitigate any recreational disturbance impacts in compliance with the Habitat Regulations and Habitats Directive.

Alternatives: There are no reasonable alternatives as this policy is a requirement of the Habitat Regulations Assessment. An option not to include this policy would not be sustainable and would be contrary to the Habitat Regulations.

Plan policies

This chapter outlines each of the policies within the neighbourhood plan and discusses the significant environmental effects of each of the policies in the short, medium and long term. Where appropriate mitigation measures are suggested. The chapter concludes with an appraisal of the plan overall.

VSB 1: To extend the current Village Settlement Boundary to include the area of Fiddlers Field (formerly known as Site 226)

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy VSB 1	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy VSB 1 will lead to the delivery of the number of homes needed to meet Eight Ash Greens OAN in the plan period by extending the settlement boundary to include a site capable of delivering 150 dwellings. Elsewhere, restricting the settlement boundary around the built up area of the village will protect village identity, open spaces and landscape character.

FF 1 – To designate Fiddlers Field as a single Strategic Site for the development 150 dwellings

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy FF1	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Policy FF1 will deliver the total OAN for Eight Ash Green in the plan period.

FF 2 – Up to 150 residential dwellings on Fiddlers Field with a layout of medium density and design to be compatible with the character and context of the village

FF 3 – A mix of residential dwellings comprising houses, bungalows and flats of no more than two storeys high which meet the evidenced housing needs of the village offering homes for first time buyers, downsizers, families and executives

FF 4 - A new direct access road built to a standard which can accommodate HGV traffic and to the satisfaction of the local Highways Authority, will be provided directly linking Fiddlers Hill to the A1124 with access to the said road being provided by way of priority junctions

FF 5 – A specific speed limit and other speed limiting measures that are appropriate to the residential roads within Fiddlers Field site

FF 6 – A new pavement built to standards outlined within Highways England Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 7 Pavements Design and Maintenance, will be provided along the northern edge of the A1124 to connect the site to the village facilities

FF 7 – A pedestrian through route linking to the Holy Trinity School and the Fiddlers Folly development

FF 8 – Two new bus stops, including lay-by, raised kerb and shelter located on the A1124 within 50 metres of the site entrance

FF 9 – A suitable landscaping plan which provides screening to the existing businesses on Fiddlers Farm and adjacent houses, to include the Grade 2 listed Fiddlers Farmhouse, all of which border and limit any expansion of the site, to ensure that ambient noise and amenity currently enjoyed at these properties is maintained

FF 10 – A scheme demonstrating that appropriate surface water drainage is provided within the site

FF 11 – Appropriate wiring to be installed within each property to provide for charging for electric cars/vehicles

FF 12 - Ducting to be installed to every new house on the site for the provision of either copper or fibre superfast broadband

FF 13 - All the new dwellings on the site should have the potential for the installation of sustainable battery pods that stores energy from renewable sources

FF 14 – A Section 106 agreement in respect of a recreational play area on the site, a contribution towards the delivery of a new community centre/hub, a contribution towards the expansion of the local primary school and should it be found necessary, a contribution towards the expansion of capacity of Junction 26 of the A12

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policies FF2 – FF14	+	0	+	-	+	?	+	+

Policies FF2-FF14, which set out criteria for new housing on the allocated site, will result in many positive environmental effects. Housing will be delivered which will meet Eight Ash Green's OAN. This will include a mix of housing types, including affordable housing, to meet the evidenced needs of the village. Sustainable transport linkages will likely be delivered at the same time as the housing, which may benefit existing residents by creating a safe footway to the school and two new bus stops. A landscaping scheme will be required which will mitigate any potential impact on residential amenity and the setting of the adjacent listed building. The impact on heritage assets is uncertain as until the landscape scheme is prepared the impact on heritage assets is unknown. There will be a positive impact on taking steps to prevent flooding through the requirement of a scheme demonstrating that appropriate surface water drainage is provided within the site. There will be a positive impact on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources through a requirement for appropriate wiring to be installed to enable charging for electric vehicles and the potential for the installation of sustainable battery pods that stores energy from renewable sources. There is potential for a negative impact on biodiversity as the site the criteria apply to is adjacent to a local wildlife site. New residents may use this adjacent land for recreation, including daily dog walking, which can lead to trampling. It is suggested that a criteria is added to the policy requiring an application for development of the site to demonstrate that the adjacent local wildlife site will not be adversely affected.

Domestic Housing Policy (DH1): Future development within Eight Ash Green should be able to clearly demonstrate by way of relevant plans and supporting documents that it should:

- ***Be of a density, design, height and layout that respects and responds to the local character of the village and the location/site's context***
- ***Provide a mix of dwelling size, type and tenure that reflects the housing needs of the Parish***
- ***Provide electric charging points and sustainable battery pods wherever possible and appropriate to do so***
- ***Provide suitable connections for the installation of high quality telecommunications infrastructure***

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy DH1	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0

Policy DH1 will result in positive effects on the housing objective through the requirement to include a mix of housing types, including affordable housing, to meet the evidenced needs of the village. It will also result in positive impacts on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources through a requirement for electric charging points and sustainable battery pods. These impacts are likely to be more longer term.

Environment Policy 1 (EP1): No development is to be permitted that will and/or could result in, or provide the possibility of future coalescence of Eight Ash Green with Stanway/Colchester and/or the proposed West Tey Garden community/New Town

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy EP1	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy EP1 will protect landscape, open spaces and the character of the village by preventing coalescence with Stanway and Colchester. It is likely that this will be achieved throughout the plan period as a site is allocated to meet the OAN within the plan period.

Environment Policy 2 (EP 2): The areas of green space in the village are to be protected from development, including change of use, unless it can be demonstrated that:-

- the chosen site represents the only available location for the given development proposal;***
- the proposal would not result in the loss of an area important for its amenity including its contribution to biodiversity, recreation and landscape character with Eight Ash Green; and***
- Alternative and improved provision is provided in a location well related to the functional requirements of the relocated use and its existing and future users***

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy EP2	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy EP2 will permanently protect existing open spaces and biodiversity throughout the plan period.

Environment Policy 3 (EP 3): Any developments in the village that may result in the destruction and/or removal of existing hedgerows, trees or woods, will only be permitted if these elements are replaced with similar features that are in good condition, on the same site or plot

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy EP3	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy EP2 will permanently protect hedgerows, trees and woods, and biodiversity throughout the plan period.

Environment Policy 4 (EP 4): Existing footpaths, cycleways and bridleways provide a high level of amenity value and will be protected. New developments should integrate with the current green infrastructure network, seeking to improve the connectivity between wildlife area and green spaces through measures such as improving and extending the existing footpath and cycle path network, allowing greater access to housing and retail facilities, green spaces, public open spaces and the countryside

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy EP4	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0

Policy EP4 will result in positive effects on sustainable travel and biodiversity through the requirement for new development to integrate with the current green infrastructure network.

Environment Policy 5 (EP 5): Development will be supported where it can be shown that it will not negatively impact upon the existing network of drainage ditches within the village. The protection, extension and enhancement of these facilities is encouraged. Where it is necessary to enable development, the stopping up or diverting of drainage ditches will be supported if it can be demonstrated that no additional flood risk will be created

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy EP5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+

Policy EP5, which supports development that will not negatively impact upon the existing network of drainage ditches within the village will result in positive effects on the objective to take steps to prevent flooding in the village.

Heritage Policy 1 (Her 1): Any Listed Building or Historic Asset and their setting within the Neighbourhood Plan Area should be maintained or where possible enhanced to protect from any future development.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy Her 1	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0

Policy Her 1 will have a positive impact on heritage assets by requiring listed buildings or historic assets to be maintained or where possible enhanced. To reflect the NPPF and provide greater certainty over what is require the term heritage assets should be used.

Renewable Energy 1 - (Homes) (RE 1): Proposals for small-scale renewable energy generation associated within single residential properties will be supported provided it can be shown that they are located and designed in such a manner so as to minimise any increase in ambient noise levels and avoid any unacceptable impacts upon visual amenity

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy RE 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0

Policy RE 1 will result in positive effects on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources by supporting proposals for micro-generation. Whilst the impact for a single dwelling is likely to be small, cumulatively this policy will result in positive environmental effects.

Renewable Energy 2 - (Solar Farms) (RE 2): Proposals for commercial solar farms will be supported where they are directed towards low grade agricultural land or brownfield sites and are designed in such a way so as to minimise increases in ambient noise levels and deliver adequate natural screening to avoid impacts upon visual amenity

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy RE 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0

Policy RE 2 will result in positive effects on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources by supporting proposals for commercial solar farms.

Businesses Policy 1 (BP 1): Moat Farm (shown above) is designated as a business area. Proposals for the enhancement of existing facilities or for new business premises on the site will be supported provided they are of suitable design, provide satisfactory car parking for staff and visitors and have implemented a strategy for the containment and subsequent disposal of waste

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy BP 1	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0

Policy BP 1, which supports the enhancement of existing facilities or new business premises at Moat Farm, will result in positive effects on the objective to support and where appropriate expand the local businesses to boost the local economy and employment. Wording is included in the policy to mitigate negative effects expansion may bring.

Businesses Policy 2 (BP 2): Support will be given towards the retention of existing businesses within the Fiddlers Farm business area (shown above) to include the provision of satisfactory car parking for staff and visitors as well as for the provision of a strategy to secure the containment and subsequent disposal of waste

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy BP 2	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0

Policy BP 2, which supports the retention of existing facilities within the Fiddlers Farm business area, will result in positive effects on the objective to support and where appropriate expand the local businesses to boost the local economy and employment. Wording is included in the policy to mitigate negative effects.

Community Amenities (CA 1): To protect the allotments site (as shown below) from any future potential development

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy CA 1	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Policy CA 1 will result in positive effects on the retention of open space by protecting the allotments.

Community Site (CS 1): Land on the site of the Church of England Church (as shown below) is designated as the site for a new Community Hub/Hall and shall be safeguarded for that purpose. Development proposals which promote alternative uses on the site will not be supported

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy CS 1	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0

Policy CS 1 is likely to have a positive impact on the objective to provide, support, maintain and where appropriate, introduce a range of amenities in the village. Whilst it is not certain that a new community facility will be provided, it is more likely where there is a policy supporting a new community hall.

RAMS 1 - All residential development within the zones of influence of European Sites will be required to make a financial contribution towards mitigation

measures, as detailed in the Essex coast RAMS, to avoid adverse in-combination recreational disturbance effects on European Sites.

In the interim period, before the Essex Coast RAMS is completed, all residential development within the zones of influence will need to deliver all measures identified (including strategic measures) through project level HRAs, or otherwise, to mitigate any recreational disturbance impacts in compliance with the Habitat Regulations and Habitats Directive.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy RAMS1	O	O	O	+	O	O	O	O

Policy RAMS 1 will avoid and mitigate likely significant effects in terms of recreational disturbance on Habitats sites in-combination by requiring contributions towards the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. Contributions will be secured throughout the lifetime of the plan and include all residential development, not just the allocated site. It is highly likely that contributions will be collected as this is an Essex wide strategy to meet the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. The policy will ensure positive effects on biodiversity by avoiding likely significant effects on Habitats sites.

Significant environmental effects of the policies and proposals

As the summary table, below, shows the neighbourhood plan will, cumulatively through implementation of all of the policies, result in positive effects on all of the SEA objectives. These effects will occur throughout the plan period and the effects will largely be permanent. A negative effect is likely on biodiversity as the allocated site is adjacent to a local wildlife site. The next section discusses mitigation to avoid a negative effect on biodiversity. The effects on heritage assets is uncertain owing to the adjacent listed building. The neighbourhood plan does include a policy protecting and where possible enhancing heritage assets and this is a form of mitigation.

	SEA 1	SEA 2	SEA 3	SEA 4	SEA 5	SEA 6	SEA 7	SEA 8
Policy VSB 1	+	O	O	+	O	O	O	O

Policy FF1	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policies FF2 – FF14	+	0	+	-	+	?	+	+
Policy DH1	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
Policy EP1	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy EP2	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy EP3	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy EP4	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
Policy EP5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
Policy Her 1	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
Policy RE 1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
Policy RE 2	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0
Policy BP 1	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy BP 2	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy CA 1	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
Policy CS 1	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
Policy RAMS1	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

The neighbourhood plan will ensure that housing will be delivered, which will meet Eight Ash Green's OAN. This will include a mix of housing types, including affordable housing,

to meet the evidenced needs of the village. Sustainable transport linkages will likely be delivered at the same time as the housing, which may benefit existing residents by creating a safe footway to the school and two new bus stops. A landscaping scheme will be required which will mitigate any potential impact on residential amenity, the setting of the adjacent listed building and landscape character. There is potential for a negative impact on biodiversity as the site the criteria apply to is adjacent to a local wildlife site. New residents may use this adjacent land for recreation, including daily dog walking, which can lead to trampling. There will be a positive impact on taking steps to prevent flooding through the requirement of a scheme demonstrating that appropriate surface water drainage is provided within the site and requirements for sustainable urban drainage systems. There will be a positive impact on encouraging the effective and efficient use of the earth's natural resources through a requirement for appropriate wiring to be installed to enable charging for electric vehicles and the potential for the installation of sustainable battery pods that stores energy from renewable sources. The plan will protect landscape, open spaces and the character of the village by preventing coalescence with Stanway and Colchester. It is likely that this will be achieved throughout the plan period as a site is allocated to meet the OAN within the plan period. The plan will permanently protect existing open spaces, hedgerows, trees, woodland and biodiversity throughout the plan period. Green infrastructure is required, which will result in positive effects on sustainable travel, biodiversity and surface water flooding. The plan will result in positive effects on taking steps to reduce flooding in the village by protecting existing ditches. The plan will have a positive impact on heritage assets by requiring listed buildings or historic assets to be maintained or where possible enhanced. The plan will result in positive effects on the local economy and employment by supporting the expansion of local businesses.

Mitigation measures

It is suggested that a criteria is added to the policies FF2-FF14 requiring an application for development of the allocated site to demonstrate that the adjacent local wildlife site will not be adversely affected by development. This could include details of new open space within the site to meet the daily needs of future residents.

To reflect the NPPF and provide greater certainty over what is required, the term heritage assets should be used in policy Her 1.

Wording is included in policies BP 1 and BP 2 to mitigate negative effects expansion of existing employment areas may bring.

Uncertainties and risks

Owing to the late stage in plan preparation there is a risk that the SEA will not be fit for purpose. However, the SEA has been prepared with an open mind and mitigation measures have been suggested. The SEA has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive and clearly sets out the likely environmental effects of the neighbourhood plan and the likely environmental effects of reasonable alternatives.

Implementation

Once made, neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan. The Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan for Colchester. The emerging Colchester Borough Local Plan includes a policy for Eight Ash Green which states that a neighbourhood plan is being prepared and this will allocate sites to meet the OAN in Eight Ash Green. The emerging Local Plan includes development management policies, which will apply to development in Eight Ash Green in addition to the neighbourhood plan.

A Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment, has been prepared for the emerging Colchester Local Plan. This has not identified any negative environmental effects in Eight Ash Green.